

# Taking Root in Air



How to function without limitation in some of the most restrictive environments: the Arts in public education!



# Things not to do....

- Set impossible goals
- Do it alone
- Imagine there is money
- Hope there is commitment
- Negotiate away the heart of it
- Pretend you'll ever be done



# Some causal relationships...

- Vision



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- Strength and conviction, coupled with boldness will supercede any risk
- The first one prepared to take responsibility is you





# Romancing the stone (cold heart)

- Music is not the only artform
- Contests are not worth the effort
- Competitions suggest winners (and losers)
- Elementary is not impossible; secondary will kill you
- Do not confuse high quality presentations with high quality instruction
- Professional Development is only for those who want to change or can
- All students can succeed given appropriate instruction



# Data driven decisions (cold facts)

- How many students are actually enrolled in each artform?
- Which schools have 1, 2, 3, or 4 artforms available?
- What are the real percentages of “F” requirement coursework available in high schools?
- Do counselors program students into the available matrix or create matrices to meet student needs?
- Are arts teachers included in decision-making?
- Do arts teachers want to be included in decision-making?
- What evidence is there that standards-based instruction is actually occurring?



# Truth in Advertising (cold reality)

- Does poverty shape student opportunities?
- Does the district make unspoken assumptions about student capacity?
- Are schools built and staffed for the number of students who should be there, or the number who end up being there?
- Can an administrator actually be an instructional leader for an arts teacher?
- Are there sacred cows in the arts -- things that can't be touched?
- Could arts assessment actually tell us what students are learning?



# Yes, Mary it is possible . . .

- Create your plan and stick to it
  - A. Until you need to change it
- Be emphatic about the components of your plan
  - A. But find 1,000 ways to say it
- Discard the plan's weakness and failure points
  - A. Despite people's desire to maintain what they know



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- There is already too much to do in a classroom or school. Isn't this yet again one more thing to do?



So, answer me this, mister . . .

- There is already too much to do in a classroom or school. Isn't this yet again one more thing to do?
  - A. You will always do what you value.
  - "Spend a lot of time talking about the value of the arts"



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# So, answer me this, mister . . .

- Should I start small in limited locations and in model program efforts or go for the big-time?
  - A. If you scale up too large, too fast, or promise everything, you will be crushed by the lack of clarity.
  - “Early efforts need to provide ample experimentation”





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- How do I know if we are being successful?



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- How do I know if we are being successful?
  - A. Real success usually takes 6-7 years. Wait for the collective passion that will sustain the efforts.
  - “Find ways to relieve the burdensome elements of the program from teachers and administrators”



# Some other things . . .

- Dancers are smarter than they think they are.
- Playing a linear staff of music accurately, does not mean you can be flexible.
- Hearing your own solo voice on-stage, does not mean you listen well.
- Working in isolation with visual arts materials does not build relationships.
- Technology is not your friend, if you have nothing to say.



# Here we go . . .

- Write an Arts Instructional Guide or curriculum that reflects the future
- Make it conceptual, not robotic.



# Here we go . . .

- Pay attention to what arts teachers say and do.
- Lay out a thoughtful plan of professional development that is based on increments of absorption . . . don't tell them your full expectations.



# Here we go . . .

- Put money where your mouth is.
- It is better to pay for great catering and a comfortable space than continue the “poor us” mentality. Impoverished experiences create barren ideas.



# Here we go . . .

- Invite your enemies to the table.
- Difficult conversations point the way to opportunities. People who don't want to help, or place obstructions in your way are actually telling you what you need to do. Be an artist, create a different solution.



# Here we go . . .

- Be more prepared than your other colleagues.
- We have to be. Everyone assumes we are flakes. But do it your way. People love the unexpected.





# Here we go . . .

- Always make your boss or superintendent or board member look good.
- They frequently say stupid things. Take the kernel of their comment and show how it represents a widely held opinion that needs exploration and depth.



So let's get . . .

. . . physical.



Always have . . .

. . . information



Keep all of your . . .

. . . speeches



Have student . . .

. . . art work



Create parent . . .

. . . advisors



Work with arts . . .

. . . groups  
(on your terms)



# Let's take a look at . . .

- Scope & Distribution over 10 years
- Big Ideas in the Arts
- Goals, Objectives, Benchmarks 1999-2010
- Components of an Arts Instructional Guide
- Capacity Building Indicators (ES, MS, HS)
- Arts Coursework Sequence: Secondary School
- Components of an arts partnership
- A sample of student achievement